
CANCER FACTS

National Cancer Institute • National Institutes of Health

Questions and Answers About the Cancer Information Service

1. What is the Cancer Information Service?

The Cancer Information Service (CIS) is a program of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the Nation's lead agency for cancer research. The CIS is a resource for information and education about cancer and a leader in helping people become active participants in their own health care by providing the latest information on cancer in understandable language. Through its network of regional offices, the CIS serves the United States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Pacific Islands.

For 25 years, the Cancer Information Service has provided the latest and most accurate cancer information to patients and families, the public, and health professionals by:

- interacting with people one-on-one through its Information Service,
- working with organizations through its Partnership Program,
- participating in research efforts to find the best ways to help people adopt healthier behaviors, and
- providing access to NCI information over the Internet.

2. How does the CIS Information Service assist the public?

Through the CIS toll-free telephone service (**1-800-4-CANCER**), callers speak with knowledgeable, caring staff who are experienced at explaining medical information in terms the public can easily understand. CIS information specialists answer calls in English and Spanish. They also answer calls from the deaf and hard of hearing through the toll-free TTY number (**1-800-332-8615**). CIS staff have access to comprehensive, accurate information from the NCI on a range of cancer topics, including the most recent advances in cancer treatment. They take as much time as each caller needs, provide thorough and personalized attention, and keep all calls confidential.

Cancer Research • Because Lives Depend On It



The CIS also provides live, online assistance to users of NCI Web sites through *LiveHelp*, an instant messaging service that is available from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday. Through *LiveHelp*, information specialists provide answers to questions about cancer and help in navigating NCI Web sites.

Through the telephone or *LiveHelp* service, CIS users receive:

- answers to their questions about cancer including ways to prevent cancer, how to quit smoking, symptoms and risks, diagnosis, current treatments, and research studies;
- written materials from the NCI;
- referrals to clinical trials and cancer-related services such as treatment centers, mammography facilities, or other cancer organizations; and
- assistance in quitting smoking from information specialists trained in smoking cessation counseling.

3. What kind of assistance does the CIS Partnership Program offer?

Through its Partnership Program, the CIS collaborates with established national, state, and regional organizations to reach minority and medically underserved audiences with cancer information. Partnership Program staff provide assistance to organizations that are developing programs that focus on breast and cervical cancer, clinical trials, tobacco control, and cancer awareness for special populations. To reach those in need, the CIS:

- helps bring cancer information to people who do not traditionally seek health information or who may have difficulties doing so because of educational, financial, cultural, or language barriers;
- provides expertise to organizations to help strengthen their ability to inform people they serve about cancer; and
- links organizations with similar goals and helps them plan and evaluate programs, develop coalitions, conduct training on cancer-related topics, and use NCI resources.

4. How do CIS research efforts assist the public?

The CIS plays an important role in research by studying the most effective ways to communicate with people about healthy lifestyles; health risks; and options for preventing, diagnosing, and treating cancer. The ability to conduct health communications research is a unique aspect of the CIS. Results from these research

studies can be applied to improving the way the CIS communicates about cancer and can help other programs communicate more effectively.

5. How do people reach the Cancer Information Service?

To speak with a CIS information specialist:

- Call 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237), 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. local time, Monday through Friday.
- Deaf or hard of hearing callers with TTY equipment may call 1-800-332-8615.

To obtain online assistance:

- Visit the CIS Web site at **<http://cancer.gov/cis>** and click on the *LiveHelp* link between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

For information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- Call 1-800-4-CANCER and select option 4 to hear recorded information at any time.
- Visit NCI's Web site at **<http://cancer.gov>** on the Internet.

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Sources of National Cancer Institute Information

NCI Online

CancerMail Service

To obtain a contents list, send e-mail to cancermail@cips.nci.nih.gov with the word "help" in the body of the message.

CancerFax® fax on demand service

Dial 1-800-624-2511 or 301-402-5874 and follow the voice-prompt instructions.

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